KEEPING PACE WITH CHANGE

"DSMC 95" and the Acquisition Environment

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If we had to use one word to characterize the acquisition environment during the past several years, the word would be "change." In the late 1980s, we saw the streamlining effect of the Defense Management Report (DMR) on acquisition organizations. We witnessed the start of the end of the Cold War to a status sometimes referred to as the "Cool War." In turn, this warming trend has had a major impact on acquisition by lowering defense budgets, shrinking the defense industrial base, and reducing the acquisition workforce.

In another major change to acquisition, Congress in 1990 passed the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) which provided structure to the acquisition workforce by creating the concept of an acquisition corps, and establishing minimum training and education requirements for program executive officers (PEOs), program managers (PMs) and deputy program managers (DPMs). Implementation directives and manuals followed, such as DoD 5000.52-M, "Career Development Program For Acquisition Personnel." These provided detailed training requirements for the acquisition workforce.

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DSMC 95 NINETY-FIVE

A third area of change which has gained momentum in late 1993 and early 1994 is the Acquisition Reform Initiative of Secretary of Defense William J. Perry. Along with concepts such as simplifying the solicitation process, raising the threshold of the simplified acquisition threshold to $100,000, and use of commercial products and services, this initiative places great emphasis on a highly trained and effective acquisition workforce.

One of the significant fallouts from this initiative has been the decision by Mrs. Colleen A. Preston, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform), to separate the current 20-week Program Management Course (PMC) into two parts. Part I is aimed at *program management* and is targeted "for 12, not to exceed 14, weeks in length unless the Acquisition Management Functional Board approves a longer course." Part II is approximately four weeks in length and is aimed at *PMs*; i.e., senior civilian and military officers selected to major system PM and DPM positions. Together, these two courses satisfy the same DAWIA requirements as the current PMC. However, they should be looked upon as two separate (but integrated) courses rather than two parts of one course.

The effect of the first set of changes has been to start causing a reduction in student thruput requirements for the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC). However, the second and third sets have done the opposite. They have resulted in a significant increase in student thruput requirements as the Department of Defense (DoD) implements a leaner, but more professional workforce.

Because of the uncertainty associated with these events, Brig Gen (Sel) Claude M. Bolton, Jr., USAF, DSMC Commandant, chartered Project "DSMC 95" in August 1993, to examine the impact of the environment on how the College provides its educational, research, consulting and information products. The thrust of the charter is to ensure the College oper-

ates more efficiently as resources are reduced in the 1990s.

The Charter

The following tasks were defined in the charter:

— Identify student thruput requirements as the defense establishment downsizes.

— Obtain Levels I, II and III workforce competencies from the career path functional boards.

— Define core courses that DSMC should sponsor. This includes the courses horizontally in each career field, and vertically across or common to several career fields.

— Determine the optimum curriculum design and presentation mediums that best support the defined core courses.

— After synthesizing data provided by the environment, core course analysis, and curriculum design teams, provide recommendations for adjustments in the DSMC organization and staffing to best meet future customer educational needs.

— Develop processes for continuous updating of competencies in coordination with the functional boards.

— Develop processes for institutionalizing customer assessments; i.e., how well are we meeting customer needs?

Early Activities

One of the first activities of any project is to determine the product of the project and, working backwards, lay out a viable program structure. In this case, the product is a report to the Commandant, giving options for his decision regarding the taskings shown above.

The next activity was to define the acquisition environment, develop an organization to accomplish the project, and form a plan with project activities. Of course, no DoD project has ever been started without a logo, so the one shown at the beginning of this article was agreed upon. However, the project manager insisted we would not have coffee cups imprinted with the logo!

FIGURE 1. DSMC 95 Activities

To keep things simple, the basic charter would contain, among other guidance, tabs depicting the project organization and initial plan, and the tabs would be updated, as needed, during the project execution. As a project management scheduling tool, the project team selected a commercially available software package based on the Program Evaluation Review Technique (PERT). This package keeps the baseline schedule visible, but allows updates to the schedule being executed. At the press of a computer key, it also translates the PERT network chart into an easy-to-read milestone chart. Project personnel also came up with a top level activities chart (Figure 1) referred to as "animated PERT."

The project was organized by integrated product teams (IPTs). Each IPT was assigned a specific product for the overall project. These products lined up with the taskings above, much as in a work-breakdown structure. For example, one team is responsible for determining the optimum organization and staffing for academic year 1995 and the near-term following years.

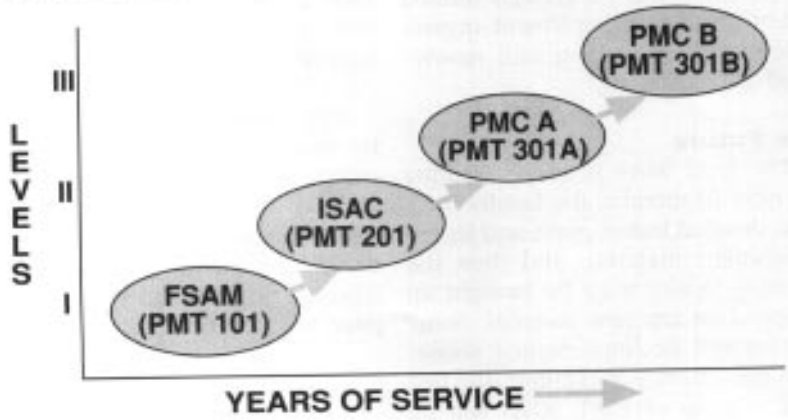
The project does not have full-time personnel, but is supported from the DSMC-matrixed, functional faculty and staff, who continue to perform their primary education, research, consulting and information roles while working on the project. This organizational approach has some obvious drawbacks; e.g., faculty members not always available for DSMC 95 activities. However, its strong point is that it keeps team members close to the educational process, reinforcing their judgment and ability to make sound recommendations.

The project organization as of 15 April involves about 100 faculty and staff in various subprojects. Because this is one out of four people on campus, project momentum and synergism has been building as the project progresses.

Execution to Date

The project manager's report for the Commandant is scheduled for August 1994. To date, the following activities have been accomplished:

FIGURE 2. The Education Continuum



— Career path competencies have been identified and scrubbed against the material in DSMC courses. Common core competencies which cross career paths have been provided by the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Core Curriculum Working Group. These competencies have been scrubbed against courses that are intended to be mandatory for several career fields. The competencies are the most significant part of the "requirement"; i.e., what we teach.

— Based on the competency scrub, deficiencies have been identified and are being filled as curricula is developed.

— The horizontal (within career fields) and vertical (across career fields) courses that DSMC either teaches, or will teach, have been identified in the FY 1995 academic calendar. An example of the integrated PM career field courses and their corresponding workforce levels is shown in Figure 2. The courses shown in the figure are sometimes referred to as the DSMC core courses since they represent the core business/products of DSMC. For the first time at DSMC, these four courses are being designed as integrated courses where each builds on the material of the course before it. Reading from left to right, the courses are: Fundamentals of System Acquisition (FSAM)/Program Management Training (PMT) 101; Intermediate Systems Acquisition Course/PMT 201; Program Management Course A (PMC A)/PMT 301A; and Program Management Course B (PMC B)/PMT 301B.

The acronym PMT is a DAU designation shown in the DAU course catalog. Based on late-breaking information, the revised PMT 101 and 201 will be redesignated as Acquisition (ACQ) 101 and 201, respectively, because they will be DAU Core courses; i.e., mandatory for several career fields. Also, in the future, PMC A will be known as the Advanced Program Management Course (APMC) or PMT 302; and PMC B will be known as the Executive Program Manager's Course (EPMC), or PMT 303.

— A thruput model has been developed by the Office of the President, DAU. The model needs further refinement, but for now it indicates that the current DAWIA "bow wave" may start receding about 1996. Thruput is one half of the "requirement" (the other being competencies), and it will impact heavily on determining future workload and staffing levels.

— In February, work began on curricula design. Based on the competencies, lesson topics/lesson blocks were developed along with lesson objectives, desired learning outcomes (DLOs), Lesson Assignment Sheets (LASs) and schedules for PMT 101 and 201. Approaches for PMT 301A and 301B also were agreed upon. The concepts for all four integrated DSMC PM career field courses were briefed and approved by the Acquisition Management (AM) Functional Board. The PMT 101 is targeted for nine vice the current five days; PMT 201 is targeted for four weeks which is the same as the current course. The revised PMT 101 and 201 are also planned to fulfill fundamental and intermediate course requirements, respectively, of several other career fields.

— Some basic decisions made to date are:

— Eight hundred forty students per year in PMT 301A (at least in FY 1995)

— Two PMT 301A offerings per year in the beginning

— Nominal 30 students per section in all courses (some exceptions, such as PMT 301B)

— The two DAU core courses (PMT 101, PMT 201) will be prerequisites for PMT 301A

— Two out of 14 sections will pilot PMT 301A in PMC 95-1

— Upgraded PMT 101 starts pilot in late August 1994; upgraded PMT 201 starts pilot in October 1994; PMT 301A starts pilot in March 1995; and PMT 301B starts pilot in July 1994.

— As part of the development of the revised PMT 101 and 201 courses, DSMC is conducting close liaison with other DAU Consortium schools which will be teaching those courses, in order to have the best available material and teaching methods for each course. In fact, in some cases, other Consortium schools are responsible for specific lesson development. For courses sponsored by other Consortium schools, but taught by DSMC, this process works in reverse.

— Some initial work has been done on designing and staffing an organization to support DSMC education, consulting, research and information products. But that work is low priority as DSMC works on developing the products — particularly educational products. The key here is that the educational products will be the key driver in any organizational and staffing concept. In any event, the DSMC organization and staffing will change as little as possible during the transition to the new courses. Changes, if required, will follow the transition to the new products — probably sometime around mid-1995. The rationale is that there will be enough turmoil without trying to implement organizational changes along with new/revised courses.

The Future

The hard work is ahead. During the next 10 months, the faculty must write detailed lesson plans and lesson assignment material, and then the teaching faculty must be brought up to speed on the new material. Some courses will be implemented sooner than the others. For example, the first pilot offering of PMT 301B will be given to a group of 10-15 prospective PMs in July-August 1994. The PMT 301A will not be piloted until March-June 1995.

The DSMC is coping with change by overhauling the education, consulting, research and information status quo. The DSMC 95 model shown in the deployment flow chart in Figure 3, captures that process. It can be repeated in the future as we keep pace with change.

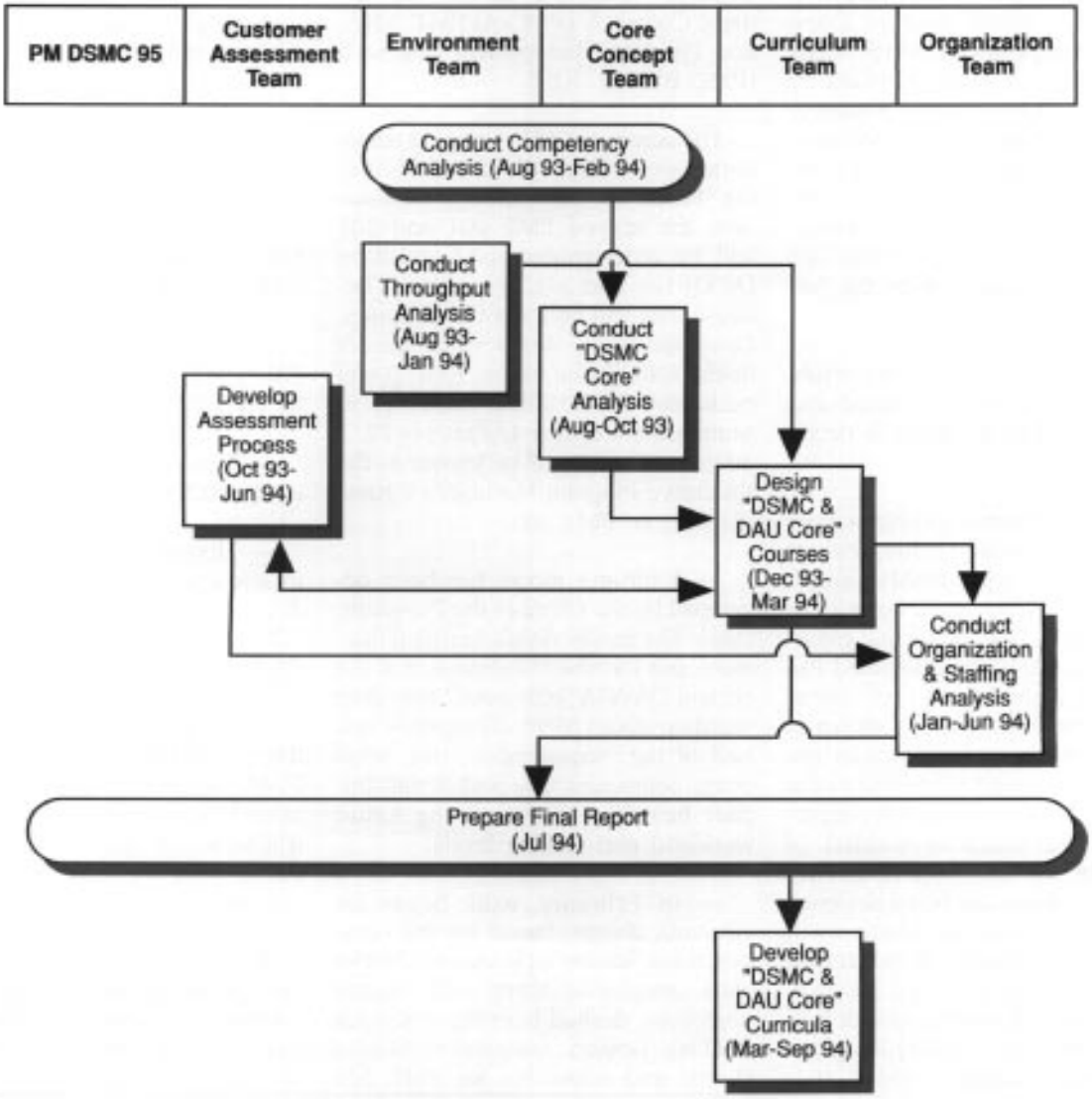



FIGURE 3. DSMC 95 Activities